

more ... BRIDGE TIPS FOR ANYONE

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Play Rule 1: When playing to a trick as 3rd hand, play the lowest of equal cards. QJx JT9x AKx
The goal here is to tell partner you *may* have higher touching cards

Play Rule 2: When winning the trick as declarer win the trick with the highest of equal cards: AKx KQJ
The goal here is to hide lower touching cards from the defenders so they might conclude that *their* side holds the missing card (s).

How should declarer play various card combinations?

1. Playing the AQT combination

Dummy: AQTxx

You: xx

You have a 1NT opener: KJTxx AQTxx AJx and partner transfers you to 2H holding: xx AQTxx xxx xxx and promptly passes. You are in the right contract. The defense starts the K of clubs which you properly duck as 3rd hand contributes the 3. LHO, knowing partner has no big card in clubs, switches to the 6 of spades, 3rd hand rising with the A and the 5 of clubs of course comes back. You rise and win the trick, LHO plays the 7. Time for a trump play.

Lead a heart and call for dummy's Ten! Why the Ten? This play caters to the chance that LHO holds BOTH the K and the J, which is a 25% proposition. The honors can be divided 4 ways: The K and J both with LHO, the K and J both with RHO, the K with LHO and the J with RHO, the J with LHO and the K with RHO. In one of the 4 LHO has both, thus 25%

Now look at the diamond suit where you have the same card combination only this time in your hand: AQTxx. As you win trump tricks in dummy you will be leading dimes back towards your hand. Your first dime play is to your Ten of dimes. You do this because dummy has 3 dimes and there is a 25% chance RHO has both the K and J of dimes.

Finally, if are in a suit contract and an off suit looks like this Dummy: AQT You: xx when you lead towards dummy, call for the Q unless you actually need a shot at 3 tricks in the suit.

2. Catering to J-4th in a defender's hand

Dummy: AQTxx

You: Kxx

This time you are in game and this is your trump suit. You are in your hand and are going to play trump. It would be wrong to start the K first. Play small to dummy's A as both defenders' play small cards. Now call for small heart from dummy and watch what RHO plays. If RHO discards, you know that LHO started with J9xx, so you rise with the K and finesse going back, picking up the whole suit.

The thing to note is that you can pick up J9xx on your left but not on the right.

Oh, but Bill, I can start the K, lead to dummy's A, get the bad news, come back to my hand and then finesse. Sure, but was it time to break a new suit? Getting to your hand with an A might leave that suit wide open. Start small from your hand to dummy's A and then back to the K, and you are doing everything all within the trump suit, breaking no side suits until you decide it's time.

3. As defenders, breaking a new suit may give up a trick.

Example: At their spade contract you start the K from KQ9x of hearts, there is xxx in dummy and partner contributes the 2 as declarer ducks. You remember Bill's Opening Leads and Signals document and you realize partner has *neither* the A *nor* the J since with either holding, partner would have played a high signaling card. Declarer ducked holding both the A and the J (AJx) and hopes you continue the suit.

Time to switch, but to what? Your complete hand: Tx KQ9x Kxxx Jxx

Dummy: AKxx xxx QJx KTx Switching to either dimes or clubs might cost your side a trick, but leading a spade can cost nothing. If partner has Qxx of spades they will score it. If they don't then you have no spade tricks coming in any event.

Example: Declarer is in spades and leads small towards Kxx in dummy, and as declarer's LHO you hold Qxx ahead of dummy. Declarer calls the K and asks for a small one back, finessing the J, as you win the Q. It's often best to just return your last spade and NOT break a new suit.

4. Playing the trump suit with the A in you hand and the Q in dummy

Dummy: Qx

You: Axxxx

Play a small trump towards the Q, hoping the K is on your left. Playing the A first wipes out any value the Q might have had in taking a trick.

Dummy: Qxx

You: Axxxx

This time you play the A first, catering to a possible stiff K on your right. If both play small then lead a 2nd round towards the remaining Qx in dummy. If LHO plays the K you are good. If LHO plays the J, cover with the Q, hoping LHO started with KJx. Yes, you lose 2 tricks if RHO started with KTx. If LHO plays the Ten, duck hoping RHO started with Kx.

Dummy: Qxx

You: ATxxx

Here the Ten in your hand makes for a much better holding. Starting the A with both following low, when you play the 2nd round towards dummy, covering LHO's J with the Q holds the hand to one trump loser no matter who has the K. If the K pops up on your left on the 2nd lead you also look good for only 1 loser.

Dummy: Q
You: Axxxxx

You start 1H, partner goes 1NT and you rebid 2H. This looks poor and it is. Leading towards the Q will at least take the K with it. But what if you don't lead towards the Q and instead, go to dummy if you can and call for the Q. If LHO holds the K the Q is lost of course. But if RHO holds the K, do they cover? With Kx they may cover but with Kxx or Kxxx they will surely duck and the Q has just won a trick.

4. When finessing, don't waste the J.

This exercise is finessing for the K without wasting the J.

Dummy: Jxx
You: AQTxx

Here you own the Ten so starting the J from dummy is correct. The Ten could be in either your hands and starting the J is the proper play. But what if you *don't* own the Ten?

Dummy: Jxx
You: AQxxx

Here you don't start the J, you call low from dummy and play the Q. The reason for this play is that you hope RHO started with Kx and the K will now drop under your A, and the carefully preserved J in dummy will capture the Ten from RHO who started with Txx. No losers in the suit. Also, if the Q loses to the K on your left, the A and J clean up the suit if it breaks 3-2.

5. A basic ruffing play

Our final exercise is one of ruffing in dummy. When playing in a suit contract, start by asking this question: "Is there a side suit where my holding is longer than dummy's and I have a chance for ruffs?" If the answer is yes, you may want to hold off pulling trump and try for the ruff (s) right away.

Dummy: xxx xx AKxx AKxx
You: AKxxx Axx xx Jxx

You are in an excellent 4S contract and LHO makes a good lead of the Ten of trump, which attacks your ability to ruff a heart in dummy. Win the A of trump (hiding the K) and lead a small heart, not the A. Let's say a trump comes back. Win the K, play the A of hearts and ruff a heart.

What if they win the heart and shift to a minor. Win in dummy, play a heart to you're a and ruff a heart.

Here you are using the heart suit as transportation to facilitate the heart ruff. If you start hearts by playing the A first and then lead small, you lose this ability.

You will find this play even more helpful in part score contracts where your trump is weaker.